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HARVEY GITTLER

Why do we think bigger is better?

Recently, I was driving around the county — Avon Lake, Avon, North Ridgeville and LaGrange — and noticed some of the new housing developments. Many of the new homes are big, really big. Some could actually qualify as McMansions. That is not to disparage the homes or the people who live in them. Rather, it is a comment on our present culture and lifestyle.

I remember the homes built right after World War II. Those homes could fit into a corner of a new large home. Everything seems to be getting bigger and bigger. And despite rising energy costs, everyone seems to be oblivious to the cost of operating everything that is bigger.

I haven't bought a new car since 1997 and I hope to postpone the purchase of one for a while. By that time I might not be able to drive; hence, I won't have to face the problem about what tank-like vehicle to buy. With the price of gas going up weekly, I don't understand how people can afford large cars. But in America, we only complain about gas prices; we don't buy smaller cars.

A recent Wall Street Journal article reported that home appliances are becoming not just bigger but massive. Certainly, if you're going to live in a massive home, shouldn't all the appliances and furnishings be massive? The article showed a combination GE freezer and refrigerator that "measures six feet across." You have to wonder if people who have such a large refrigerator/freezer are running a home or a restaurant. And at a starting price of \$14,000, you also have to wonder where all that money is coming from.

The article told of a range that included four 19,000 BTU burners, one 30,000 BTU burner, a griddle plate, and a rotisserie oven for only \$12,500. I wouldn't buy it; it didn't include a microwave oven! But then, what do you expect for only \$12,500? There's a bathtub that holds two. One for four must be on its way. What about a 27-inch high faucet?

I went to the Westfield Mall to see what was available in Elyria. Sears has a 33.7-cubic foot refrigerator/freezer that I consider big but still it's almost tiny compared to GE's 41-cubic foot unit. I couldn't believe the size of the washers and dryers I found at Best Buy. I could wash my entire wardrobe all at once in the biggest one. At Stewart's Appliance on Cleveland Street, I saw a TV set for \$5,000 that was too big to fit in my living room. If I put it in my bedroom, there would be no room for the bed.

My travel agent at ABE Travel tells me about various cruises. If the cruise features a new ship, you can bet that it is the biggest cruise ship afloat today. When I go back next week, you can be assured the next cruise will feature an even larger ship.

Not only are "things" getting bigger, but worship is now on a supermarket scale. If you watch any of the TV evangelists, you can see people gathered not in a church but in a convention-sized auditorium with an audience large enough to fill a football stadium. Because it's impossible to see the preacher from any place but a center front-row seat, there are at least five gigantic TV screens and an unbelievable audio system to bring you "The Word." Remember that old hymn, "Nearer My God To Thee — Via TV." The choir alone would overflow any local church. Is the little neighborhood church about to disappear?

Just what it is that is driving our obsession with bigness is beyond me. Obviously, Barry Bonds is not the only one on steroids. If you know anything about our obsession with bigness, send me a SMALL e-mail or note, please. I can't handle any more big things.

Harvey Gittler's column appears on Mondays. He can be contacted at hgittler@chroniclet.com.

THROUGH THE LOOKING

A weekly feature every Monday in The Chronicle



CARL SULLENBERGER / CHRONICLE PHOTOS

Benita Mitchell of Mitchell's Rib Dinners checks a batch of ribs and chicken at Saturday's Taste of South community event at Hamilton School in Elyria.

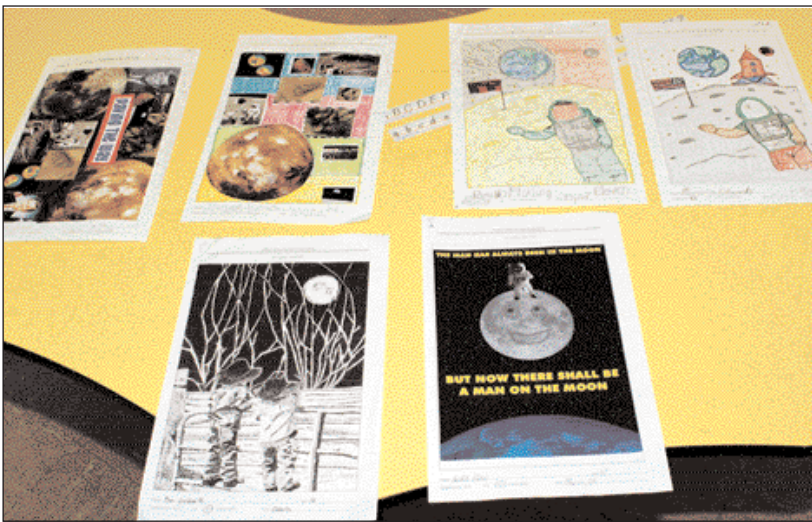
A taste for the community

The tantalizing aroma of ribs, chicken and funnel cakes was in the air this weekend as hundreds of people turned out to celebrate Elyria's south side community.

The sixth annual Taste of South event drew folks for the food, to be sure, but also for basketball games, pony rides, a dunking booth, arts and crafts and a NASA bus and experiment station.

Drawing special attention was an art contest by NASA, focusing on trips to Mars and beyond.

Winners — whose artwork is pictured at right — were (top row) Kirsten Lewis, 14, Jamiee Ross, 14, Romel Aklung, 11, and Marquise Edwards, 11, and (bottom row) Ben Goldsmith, 16, and Hardik Patel, 15.



Counties deal with unclaimed bodies

The Associated Press

AKRON — Thomas Tellis died in March, but his cremated remains are still waiting to be claimed at a Canton funeral home.

Shortly after the 89-year-old's death, investigators located Tellis' daughter, but the woman, who was born out of wedlock and raised by another man, refused to claim Tellis' body.

The case is part of what coroners and funeral directors see as a disturbing trend: bodies going

unclaimed because relatives are either unwilling or unable to shoulder the responsibility or expense of burying the dead.

Often, the reasons are economic. Funeral costs average more than \$6,000, and that can create a burden for people struggling to make ends meet, said Harry Campbell, an investigator with the Stark County coroner's office.

While Stark County deals with only a handful of unclaimed bodies every year, more populous urban counties, such as Cleveland and

Columbus, see a greater number. Last year Cuyahoga County investigated 43 cases. Franklin County had more than 140.

While these cases amount to only a fraction of the bodies that coroner's offices tend to annually, they are among the most disheartening.

"It's a fairly widespread issue," said Dr. Lisa Kohler, Summit County medical examiner. "Either the family members cannot or will not take financial responsibility for burying their loved one, or we cannot find next of kin."

Mayflies set to swarm again

Joseph Medici The Chronicle-Telegram

Every year they descend upon the communities lining Lake Erie, blanketing storefront windows, infesting local parks and crowding around street lights.

They're mayflies, the inch-long pests that fly in off the water in the hundreds of thousands every summer, and it's about time for them to resurface.

"They show up in late June and early July," said Joe Keiper, curator of Invertebrate Zoology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. "They come up from the water, mate, and die off in a matter of days and then we are left to clean up after them."

The pests have a horrid reputation because of the fishy smell their corpses give off, Keiper said, but they are little more than a nuisance in most cases.

Mayflies, like many insects, only live for 24 to 72 hours once they reach adulthood, according to Mark Willis, associate professor of biology at Case Western Reserve University. Prior to their maturation, the insects, called nymphs, live underneath the water for two to three years, feeding on algae and plankton.

"It might not sound romantic to us, but it's very effective for them," Willis said. "Every year they reach adulthood, the females lay hundreds of eggs in the water, hoping to propagate their species."

If the insects become too prevalent in small areas, they can become problems, Willis said, as their corpses pile up, creating slick spots on the roads.

Mayflies, like other insects, are attracted to bright lights, Willis said, and residents can reduce the number of insects around their homes by turning off any outdoor lights facing the lake.



TOM MAHL / CHRONICLE FILE

FAST FACTS

- There are more than 2,500 separate species of mayflies, with 114 of them native to Ohio.
- Three main burrowing species from the genus Hexagenia emerge from Lake Erie every summer and invade local streets.
- Mayflies are some of the most primitive creatures still alive.
- Scientists have found several-hundred-million-year-old fossilized mayflies that are identical to the flies seen today.
- The mayfly belongs to the scientific order Ephemeroptera, a Greek word meaning "short lived."

Sources: Joe Keiper, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and Mark Willis, Case Western Reserve University

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